



The Archive Effect: Archival Footage as an Experience of Reception

Jaimie Baron

Abstract: In recent years, “the archive” as both a concept and an object has been undergoing a transformation. The increased availability of still and video cameras, analog and then digital, has led to a proliferation of indexical documents outside of official archives and prompted questions about what constitutes an “archive,” and, hence, what constitute “archival documents.” At the same time, filmmakers are appropriating sounds and images from various sources, thereby breaking down the distinction between “found” and “archival” documents. This situation calls for a reformulation of the very notion of the archival document. This article reframes the archival document not as an object but as a spectatorial experience or a relationship between viewer and text. I contend that certain appropriated audiovisual documents produce for the viewer what I call the “archive effect” and that this encounter endows these documents with a particular kind of authority as “evidence.”

Keywords: appropriation, documentary, evidence, film, found footage, historiography, history, perception, viewer

In the past several decades, the archive as both a concept and an object has been undergoing a transformation. Although official photography, film, and television archives still promote their holdings as the most valuable and authentic basis for documentary films on historical topics, other kinds of audiovisual archives have begun to compete with them. Online databases and private collections, in particular, threaten to unseat official archives as the primary purveyors of evidentiary audiovisual documents. Indeed, while amateur photography, film, and video have always existed in an uneasy relationship with official archives, the increased availability of still and video cameras, analog and then digital, has led to a proliferation of indexical documents outside of official archives. It has also prompted questions about the nature of “archival documents” and their historical and social value as well as about their preservation. Since the 1990s official archives have been archiving amateur films, including home movies, but the rise of amateur video in particular has made the preservation of such documents increasingly partial (Zimmer-

man 2008: 13). There are simply too many documents, and it is difficult to decide which ones should be preserved by technologies rarely available outside of official film archives. At the same time, however, amateur documents, as well as almost any other kind of document, are becoming increasingly available for appropriation, this in part due to Internet sites on which an official archive or anyone else may upload or download digital (or digitized) photographs or videos with the click of a mouse.

In my view, this relatively recent situation points to a breakdown in the distinction, which was never very stable, between “archival” and “found” documents. Although filmmakers and theorists have frequently used the term “found footage” to refer to reels of film found on the street, in the trash, or at a flea market and reserved the term “archival footage” for films found inside a bona fide archive, this dichotomy is becoming increasingly difficult to justify. Indeed, the extension of the word “archive” in common discourse to stand for all kinds of collections—particularly online collections—calls for an expansion of the idea of the archive and the term “archival” to also include what might once have been referred to only as “found” documents. Film theorist Michael Zryd has argued that “found footage is different from archival footage: the archive is an official institution that separates historical record from the outtake” (2003: 41). Although Zryd offers an important insight about exclusion, I would suggest that the line between archival and found footage has become increasingly blurred both by the changing notion of what constitutes an archive and its “proper” contents and by the myriad uses to which even the most “official” documents are being put. Moreover, while the term “archival footage” has in the past been associated primarily with documentary film and the term “found footage” associated primarily with experimental film, this distinction obscures the continuities between documentary and experimental appropriations. Thus, rather than opposing the terms “found” and “archival,” I suggest we regard “foundness” as a constituent element of all archival documents, whether they were “found” in an archive or “found” on the street. This “foundness” of the archival document exists in contradistinction to documents that we perceive as produced by the filmmaker specifically for a given film. Indeed, this sense of “foundness” is integral to the experience of the archival document. It is part of what lends the archival document its aura of “authenticity” and enhances its seeming evidentiary value.

Of course, there are still structures of power in place that determine what is included or excluded from official archives, and these structures have important political, social, and historiographic ramifications for what is considered by most to be “properly” archival. Nonetheless, I would argue that the archival document may now be better understood less as a reflection of where the particular document has been stored than as an experience of the viewer watching a film that includes or appropriates documents that appear to come

from another text or context of use. Moreover, I would argue that the “found” document becomes “archival” precisely as it is recontextualized within a new film, is recognized by the viewer as “found,” and is thereby endowed with some form of evidentiary authority. Conceptualizing the archival document in this way undoes the previous hierarchy in which “archival” footage is given more value than “found” footage and suggests that amateur and other documents often excluded from official archives may have as much potential historical and social value as documents stored in an official archive.

This reformulation of the “archival document” as an experience of the viewer is grounded in a phenomenological approach to media studies most eloquently articulated by media theorist Vivian Sobchack. She argues that we may understand “documentary” not only as a kind of filmic object but also and more significantly as a mode of reception, as an experience:

The term documentary designates more than a cinematic object. Along with the obvious nomination of a film genre characterized historically by certain objective textual features, the term also—and more radically—designates a particular subjective relation to an objective cinematic or televisual text. In other words, documentary is less a thing than an experience—and the term names not only a cinematic object, but also the experienced “difference” and “sufficiency” of a specific mode of consciousness and identification with the cinematic image. (1999: 241)

Building on Sobchack’s notion that a genre such as “documentary” may be understood as a relation between viewer and text, I offer a revised formulation of what I call the “appropriation film.” The films in this category should not be seen merely as objects determined by their “inherent” and “objective” characteristics or by their deployment of particular filmmaking strategies but also as a set of films that may produce a particular *effect* or evoke a particular

The films in this category . . . may produce a particular effect or evoke a particular kind of consciousness in the viewer, however much that effect and consciousness can never be guaranteed.

kind of *consciousness* in the viewer, however much that effect and consciousness can never be guaranteed. In my reformulation, the constitution of an “appropriation film” as such is significantly dependent on the film viewer’s recognition that a film contains what I refer to as “archival documents,” which themselves are constituted only insofar as the viewer experiences them as “archival”; that is, as coming from another time or from another context of use or intended use. Thus, I am calling for a reconceptualization of the “appropriation film” as not

merely the manner and matter of the text but also as a matter of reception, dependent on the effects the film produces, namely, what I refer to as the “archive effect.”

But how do “archival documents,” thus construed, come into being? In other words, what, precisely, produces the “archive effect”? “Archival footage”

has, in common discourse, frequently been defined in opposition to footage created—rather than found—for the film we are watching. However, this definition of the archival becomes unhelpful when, for instance, we are not sure exactly who shot what footage in a given film—something that is rarely made explicit. Moreover, if the same filmmaker shot certain footage at one time and some other footage a decade later, how do we account for the different effects that these two pieces of footage may have? Indeed, I would suggest that who shot what footage is ultimately less important than the viewer’s experience of two kinds of “disparities” between different pieces of footage within the film.

I argue that what makes footage read as “archival” is, first of all, the effect within a given film generated by the juxtaposition of shots perceived as produced at different moments in time. For example, in Alain Resnais’s canonical Holocaust documentary, *Night and Fog* (1955), black-and-white images of the Auschwitz concentration camp shot during and just after the Third Reich are contrasted with color images of the abandoned camps shot by Resnais and his crew for the film ten years later. Nearly all descriptions of the film mention this evocative combination. The Criterion Collection description of the DVD version of the film, for instance, reads:

Ten years after the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, filmmaker Alain Resnais documented the abandoned grounds of Auschwitz and Majdanek. One of the first cinematic reflections on the horrors of the Holocaust, Night and Fog (Nuit et Brouillard) contrasts the stillness of the abandoned camps’ quiet empty buildings with haunting wartime footage.

Enhanced by the difference in color, the contrast between the “then” of the operational death camps and the “now” of Resnais’s own footage of the empty camps produces the black-and-white images as archival documents.

This contrast between “then” and “now” is not necessarily a matter of who shot the footage. In the *Up* series, for instance, Michael Apted has continually filmed the same film subjects every seven years, beginning when they were seven years old, and then edited footage from all of these interviews together in various ways in each subsequent film. Thus, in all of the films in the series after the first installment, *Seven Up!* (1964), we can see the physical changes that have occurred in each of the film subjects as footage from the previous films is edited into each new film. Through the juxtaposition of images of the same people at different stages in their lives, we are witness to the changes wrought by the years. In *49 Up* (2005), the footage of “Neil from Liverpool” at seven years old saying, “When I grow up, I want to be an astronaut. But if I

... what makes footage read as “archival” is, first of all, the effect within a given film generated by the juxtaposition of shots perceived as produced at different moments in time.



Figure 1.49 *Up*
(Michael Apted,
2005): Neil at 7, 28,
and 49.

can't be an astronaut, I think I'll be a coach driver," placed beside footage of his troubled 28-year-old self as well as footage of his gaunt 49-year-old self—shot during and after his struggles with mental illness and homelessness – produces a shocking recognition of time's passage (Figure 1). Indeed, this is a large part of the film series' fascination. Although Apted (or his crew) shot all of the footage, the footage from the earlier films is nevertheless experienced as “archival” in the context of each subsequent film. That is, Apted himself has created an archive of documents that he must return to each time he makes a new *Up* film so as to “find” footage that produces historical effects as it stands in contrast to documents of his subjects at the present moment of his newest installment in the series.

Hence, I suggest that we regard archival documents as – in part – the product of what I call “temporal disparity” experienced by the viewer of an appropriation film, who perceives a “then” and a “now” generated within a single text. Indeed, the experience of this temporal disparity within a given film is one of the things that gives rise to the recognition of the archival document as such, or, in other words, to the archive effect. Through its (re)contextualization in an appropriation film and the consequent production of temporal disparity and the archive effect, then, the document becomes both “found” and “archival.”

The notion of temporal disparity raises questions about when and where the line of significant difference between past and present may be drawn. At what point does the past become history? At what point does historical hindsight emerge so that a new temporal context of knowledge is put into play? In appropriation films, the break between past and present is brought about by visible (and perhaps audible) change apparent to the viewer. This may be the change marked by aging. Like the *Up* series, David Singleton's *In the Shadow of the Moon* (2007) contrasts images of the American astronauts who went to the moon in the 1960s and 1970s with interview footage of them shot in the 2000s by Singleton and his crew. However, unlike the *Up* films in which temporally disparate images are edited together in succession, this film uses a split screen to produce temporal disparity within a single composite shot. In one frame, we see the youthful astronauts at the height of their achievement while, in the other frame, we see old men reminiscing about

their younger days. The contrast between the same faces at two different historical moments produces an experience of the youthful images as archival documents.

As *Night and Fog* indicates, temporal disparity may be produced by images of places as well as people. Similarly—although much less disturbingly—Melinda Stone’s *Interactive Film Comparison: Market Street 1905–2005* (2005) emphasizes temporal contrast in relation to place using a split-screen with four quadrants (Figure 2). In the first quadrant, from a film camera mounted on a trolley, we see Market Street in San Francisco in an uninterrupted black-and-white forward tracking shot of the entire length of this street in 1905. In the second quadrant, this time from a video camera mounted on a car, we see a color image of the same space and the same uninterrupted tracking shot repeated in 2005. In the third quadrant, we see another tracking shot in black and white of the same street in 1906 just after the Great 1906 Fire and Earthquake, and in the fourth quadrant, we see black-and-white film footage almost identical to the 2005 video footage in the second quadrant. The first two quadrants place side by side similar moving images of Market Street separated by one hundred years. The fascination of this contrast lies in the opportunity it provides for us to compare the two spaces, separated not by

Figure 2. A Trip Down Market Street: 1905–2005 (Melinda Stone, 2005)



geography but by temporality, and to contemplate the play of differences and similarities that separate and unite two moments in time.

Temporal disparity, then, may be the result of gradual temporal change: the aging of the human face or the changes in the landscape over years. In these cases, we do not see the aging or change occur, but we see the difference it makes. However, temporal disparity may also be traced back to a particular instant in time. Indeed, in Stone's *Interactive Film Comparison*, we can also witness the difference between the footage in the first quadrant of Market Street in 1905—lined with buildings, bustling with cars, carriages, trolleys, bicycles, and people, and the footage in the third quadrant of Market Street after the Great 1906 Fire and Earthquake. In the 1906 footage, most of the buildings visible in the 1905 footage are collapsed and pedestrians huddled under umbrellas pick their way through the ruins. In this case, the temporal disparity can be located at a particular and abrupt moment in time, the earthquake and fire, which destroyed much of the city. Thus, temporal disparity is generated in the contrast not only between the footage taken in 1905 and 2005 but also between the footage taken in 1905 and 1906. Indeed, the 1905 footage reads as archival in relation to both the 2005 footage and the 1906 footage.

It is worth noting that this temporal disparity must be visible or audible and that it may occur either at the level of the profilmic object—a shot of an old woman placed beside her younger image, an image of a street placed next to an image of the same street a century later. Or it may occur at the level of the filmstrip or video file itself—the type of film stock, the color or lack thereof, its degree of damage or disintegration, the type of video, its sharpness or softness. Quite often this visible difference occurs on both levels at the same time.

Another experience of temporal disparity that can be traced back to a particular moment of temporal break but that is inscribed on the human body rather than a landscape is produced by the HBO film entitled *Alive Day Memories: Home from Iraq* (Jon Alpert and Ellen Goosenberg Kent, 2007), in which returned US military veterans who served and were seriously injured in the Iraq War are interviewed about their experiences. Most are missing limbs, and they refer to the day they were wounded as their “alive day.” Some of these interviews are cut together with amateur film and video footage of the veterans before their injuries occurred. In the case of one soldier, twenty-five-year-old Sgt Bryan Anderson, who had lost both legs and one arm in the war, footage of him after his injury is edited together with footage of him in high school performing gymnastic feats. This footage is experienced as archival not only because Anderson looks older in the present tense framework of the film and because the high school footage is clearly amateur rather than professional video, but also because we already know that he later lost his limbs.

Anderson's "alive day" is the moment of temporal break that guarantees an experience of the high school footage as archival, of a significant "then" and "now" retroactively produced within the appropriation film. The amateur video footage thus sets the lost "then" against the ground of what the film sets up as the normative "now."

Moreover, the production of temporal disparity often produces not only the archive *effect* but also what I call the "archive *affect*." When we are confronted by these images of time's inscription on human bodies and places, there is not only an epistemological effect but also an emotional one based in the revelation of temporal disparity. In other words, not only do we invest archival documents with the authority of the "real" past, but also with the feeling of loss. In the *Up* series, *In the Shadow of the Moon*, *Night and Fog*, *Market Street 1905/2005*, and *Alive Day*, the production of temporal disparity forces us to recognize that the past is irretrievable even as its traces are visible. The youthfulness of the film subjects in the *Up* series and *In the Shadow of the Moon* is nothing more than an indexical trace of bodies that have since aged and withered. The wholeness of the soldier's body in the archival documents in *Alive Day* can never be regained. The century between 1905 and 2005 on Market Street cannot be reversed. Those who died at Auschwitz can never be restored. Thus, our desire for the "presence" of the past through its archival traces is always accompanied by the recognition of its absence, of all that has been lost.

It is important to emphasize here that the temporal disparity associated with the archive effect is, as I have formulated it, a potential experience produced for the viewer *within* and *by* the appropriation film. There is, however, always an experience—albeit with varying degrees of intensity—of temporal disparity between the moment of the production of the appropriation film and the moment of its reception by an audience. In *Night and Fog*, the "now" of Resnais's 1955 production of the documentary is not the "now" in which we watch it decades later. In Stone's film, the color footage of Market Street in 2005 may be close enough to our "now" (at least in 2012) so that it feels contemporary, but, in twenty years, the 2005 footage may also produce a sense of temporal disparity between the making of Stone's appropriation film and its reception. Moreover, with the passage of time, our extratextual knowledge of and about the world changes, thereby altering our experience of and relationship to the appropriation film. Thus, there are always at least three temporalities at work in appropriation films: the "then" of the archival footage, the "now" of the production of the appropriation film, and the "now" of watching the appropriation film.

However, for the archive effect to occur, there must be a gap between the "then" of the document and the "now" of the appropriation film's production

. . . our desire for the "presence" of the past through its archival traces is always accompanied by the recognition of its absence, of all that has been lost.

made evident *within* the film. Certainly, there is always some temporal gap between the moment of any film's production and its reception; indeed, older films make us particularly aware of the difference between the "now" of the film's production and our own "now." Screening an old film, however, does not produce the particular temporal disparity associated with the archive effect. The experience of watching *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922) at the time of its first release was, of course, very different from the experience of watching it nearly a century later. Not only have media technologies and cultural attitudes toward the representation of non-Western "others" changed, but also part of the experience of watching Flaherty's film now is knowing that all of the people onscreen are long dead. However, arguing that any screening of any film is a temporal recontextualization obscures the very different investments the viewer may make in different kinds of sounds and images within a given film. The archive effect—and, hence, the recognition of a document as archival—is a function of the relationship between *different elements* of the *same text*, between a document placed within a new *textual* context, and not of the relationship between a text and the *extratextual* context in which it is shown.

Moreover, although the viewer's experience of temporal disparity is one means by which the archive effect may be produced, there is another catalyst to the experience of a document as archival. In a different segment of *Alive Day*, for instance, we see a grainy video image shot from a hillside as on a road below an American truck approaches a particular spot where it explodes, accompanied by the sounds of men off-screen shouting "allahu akbar," meaning in Arabic, "God is great." The image is labeled "Insurgent released video," a title that was clearly added after the fact by the makers of *Alive Day* (Figure 3). With the help of the title, for most viewers—at least those with sufficient extratextual knowledge—it will be apparent that these images were shot by the Iraqi insurgents who planted the bomb and then waited for it to explode so that they could record their handiwork. Indeed, images like this have been sent to US military headquarters and posted online as a glorification of the Iraqi insurgency. The makers of the video footage of the bombing may have intended this footage as a warning to American troops or as an insurgent recruiting tool, but its relocation in a documentary supportive of American veterans repurposes this footage in a way that the original makers were unlikely to have anticipated. Thus, footage taken from one context of use and placed in another may carry with it a trace of earlier intended uses. This footage generates the dominant sense of coming not from some other time but from a different intent—and this is the experience of what I call "intentional disparity." By this, I do not mean a disparity that is produced "on purpose" but rather a disparity based on our perception of a previous intention ascribed to and (seemingly) inscribed within the archival document. Although

I have chosen to use the term “intentional disparity” because of the way in which the viewer is frequently called upon to “divine” the intention “behind” the document, I might have also easily used the terms “social disparity” or “rhetorical disparity.” When we attribute an “original intention” to the archival document, we may be attributing it not to a filmmaker but to a social milieu or rhetorical situation that is in some way “other” to that of the appropriation filmmaker.

Writing about what she refers to as “found footage filmmaking,” media theorist Catherine Russell notes that “the found image always points, however obliquely, to an original production context, a culturally inscribed niche in the society of the spectacle, be it Hollywood, home movies, advertising, or educational films” (1999: 238). I would add that the found image not only points to a previous production context but also to a previous intended context of use and reception. Moreover, our experience of intentional disparity, like that of temporal disparity, is based in part on our own extratextual knowledge. If we do not recognize that the insurgent video in *Alive Day* was made by Iraqis in order to celebrate their bombings of American tanks and cannot distinguish this previous intent from the video’s intended function in *Alive Day*, we may not experience intentional disparity or the archive effect. Of course, these previous contexts of use or intended use are to some degree imaginary—that is, a projection of the viewer—since the actual “original” intended context cannot be definitively determined. Indeed, the archive effect does not suggest a naive return to the intentional fallacy, in which a single author (or film-

Footage taken from one context of use and placed in another may carry with it a trace of earlier intended uses.

Figure 3. Alive Day Memories: Home from Iraq (Jon Alpert, Ellen Goosenberg Kent, 2007)



maker) is positioned “behind” the work and is the arbiter of its meaning. As Roland Barthes ([1968] 1989) has argued, the meaning of a text depends to a great extent on the reader or viewer. Yet, in the context of discussing irony and parody, literary theorist Linda Hutcheon acknowledges the presence of the perception of “intentionality” in communication. She writes: “Even in a theoretical age like our own that has cast deep suspicion on the concept of intentionality, the experience of interpreting parody *in practice* forces us to acknowledge at least an inference of intention and to theorize that inference” ([1985] 2000: xiv). My examination of the role of intention in the experience of the archive effect in this study refers precisely to this inference of intention that, in practice, occurs on the part of the viewer. As documentary filmmaker Errol Morris (2009) puts it: “We read correctly or incorrectly a photographer’s intentions into every photograph we see. We also imagine the intentions of the people in a photograph. We see intentions everywhere. We even see them in the blind patterns of nature.” Indeed, the archive effect and its experience of intentional disparity is dependent on the individual viewer, who may respond to a variety of cues within the appropriated footage as well as to his or her extratextual knowledge about why this footage was made and for whom it was originally intended. None of these textual cues are a guarantee of the accuracy of a particular viewer’s perception, nor is it possible to know definitively what the “real” intentions behind such documents were or who previously saw and interpreted them. Experimental filmmaker Standish Lawder writes eloquently about the result of such cinematic recontextualization:

Stripped of its original context, the shot becomes veiled with layers of speculation, subjective evocation and poetic ambiguity. Questions of intentionality and meaning become slippery. The true significance of the a priori original image hovers just off-screen; we cannot be certain exactly why it was filmed. Yet what was filmed remains firmly fixed, only now surrounded by a thousand possible new whys. (1992: 115)

Nevertheless, despite the “thousand possible whys,” I would argue that based on certain socially, culturally, and historically specific cues as well as extratextual knowledge, viewers may come to probable conclusions about the original purpose behind the production of particular documents, and these conclusions affect the way in which viewers understand these documents as they are appropriated and recontextualized.

The experience of intentional disparity has, moreover, epistemological consequences. In contrast to documents we read as produced specifically for a given film, the documents recontextualized in appropriation films seem in excess of the appropriation filmmaker’s intentions. That is, they carry traces of another intention with them and seem to resist, at least to some degree, the intentions that the appropriation filmmaker—by argument and design—

imposes upon them. Historian and theorist Carolyn Steedman points out that, like the reader of a letter sent to someone else, the historian who uncovers any object in the archive will always, in some sense, steal or “misuse” it. “The Historian who goes to the Archive must always be an unintended reader, will always read that which was never intended for his or her eyes. Like Michelet in the 1820s, the Historian always reads the fragmented traces of *something else* . . . an unintended, purloined letter” (Steedman 2002: 75). Like the historian, the appropriation filmmaker who draws on found documents is always an unintended – or, at very least, an unanticipated – reader and user confronted by the “something else” that eludes his or her own uses and strategies of containment in a larger work. This sense of “something else”—of a document intended for other purposes—undermines the establishment of any singular or definitive meaning for these sounds and images recorded in the past. It is this experience of the document’s resistance to definitive comprehension that makes it perceived as intentionally disparate, and gives it its aura of evidentiary authority.

Archival documents—if the viewer recognizes them as such in an appropriation film—thus always generate a sense of multiple contexts and double meaning, even if these are vague and indeterminate. In other words, the very fact of the recontextualization of the found document in an appropriation film creates the opportunity for multiple readings of that document. Archival institutions often make great claims for the historical and evidentiary value of their collected documents and these documents are often used to bolster established historical narratives in many documentary films that address historical topics. However, the same archival documents can also be used to undermine the very same narrative and to belie their own status as transparent, factual evidence. By recontextualizing found documents, filmmakers may produce new and sometimes perverse or contradictory meanings from them. Yet the potential meanings and effects of these indexical archival documents always exceed the intentions of the appropriation filmmaker.

I suggest, however, that found documents may be used in appropriation films in ways that either augment or repress intentional disparity, or, in other words, augment or repress the resistance of these documents to their new textual context. I see all appropriation films as points along a continuum in which intentional disparity is repressed to a greater or lesser degree, this against what I see as a false dichotomy between “realist” compilation documentaries that use found documents in a non-dialectical, illustrative manner and “modernist” self-reflexive experimental collage films that use found documents in a critical, dialectical manner. For example, Ken Burns’s immensely popular television documentary *The Civil War* (1990) makes use of photographs taken during the American Civil War and weaves them together through a panning camera, editing, and voiceover commentary and inter-

views. Within their new textual context, these images produce an experience of both temporal disparity—the gap between the taking of the photographs and the making of the documentary, and intentional disparity—the fact that the photographs clearly could not have been originally intended by their makers for a PBS documentary. The photographs were taken at a different historical moment and with a different intent and, thus, they resist full incorporation into the film. They remain “archival documents.” However, the sense of intentional disparity is minimized. The images were not intended for Burns’s film but their previous intended purpose does not seem strongly at odds with the intent of the documentary. Indeed, it seems that the images’ intentions were to preserve a significant historical moment or event and, thus, are perceived as historically significant but also nearly “empty” of historical interpretation—that is, until they are incorporated into a larger historical narrative.

In contrast to Burns’s film, the intentional disparity between the found documents and their new textual context may be magnified and intensified. In Emile de Antonio’s *Millhouse: A White Comedy* (1971), de Antonio’s portrait of former US president Richard Nixon, for instance, footage of Nixon giving speeches and posing for the camera seems to have been originally intended for immediate broadcast on television, its purpose mainly to record and celebrate Nixon’s accomplishments. However, when in *Millhouse* footage of Nixon’s “I See a Day” speech is edited together with a clip of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech or Nixon’s “Let’s win this one for Ike” speech in which he accepted the 1968 Republican presidential nomination is placed beside a clip from the “win this one for the Gipper” scene in *Knute Rockne All American* (Lloyd Bacon, 1940), the juxtaposition reveals Nixon as a plagiarist or, at least, as unoriginal. Thus, the intentional disparity between the inferred original intended purpose of the Nixon footage and its use for satiric intent in *Millhouse* is heightened. Stella Bruzzi describes de Antonio’s use of such found footage:

De Antonio refutes entirely the purely illustrative function of archive material, instead the original pieces of films become mutable, active ingredients. Imperative to de Antonio’s idea of “democratic didacticism,” though, is that the innate meaning of this original footage, however it is reconstituted, is never entirely obscured. One vivid, consistent facet of de Antonio’s work is that his collage method does not attack hate figures like Richard Nixon, Joseph McCarthy or Colonel Patton directly, but rather gives them enough rope by which to hang themselves – turning often favourable original footage in on itself. (2000: 24)

Whereas Bruzzi suggests that de Antonio turns “favorable footage in on itself,” I suggest that it is the viewer’s perception of footage originally intended to celebrate or aggrandize these political and military figures now used to

condemn them that produces a strong sense of intentional disparity and, therefore, of a double consciousness that produces irony. Nonetheless, the important point here is not that *Millhouse* is critical and dialectical while *The Civil War* is illustrative and non-dialectical, but rather that the experience of intentional disparity is variable and may be stronger or weaker depending on the appropriation film and, of course, on the viewer.

Unsurprisingly, temporal and intentional disparity often work in tandem in the appropriation film. For instance, in *Rize* (David LaChapelle, 2005), a documentary about “clown” and “krump” dancers in South Central Los Angeles who paint their faces and dance in an intense, expressive fashion, footage of these dancers painting their faces and dancing is intercut with what appears to be ethnographic footage of tribal rituals shot in Africa (Figure 4). This ethnographic footage is not labeled, so it is unclear exactly where and when it was shot, but the slightly faded quality of the black-and-white images and the subject material itself suggest that this footage is relatively old. The fact that the footage is black and white also emphasizes its “pastness” in relation to the color footage that constitutes the rest of the film. This contrast establishes a “now” of the clown and krump dancers as opposed to the “then” of the African rituals. At the same time, the footage of the African rituals also generates a sense of intentional disparity within LaChapelle’s documentary. Despite the lack of labeling, we may, with a certain degree of extratextual knowledge, infer that the footage was shot by Western anthropologists—sometime in the twentieth century—who intended to document their encounter with African tribes in order to “salvage” these African rituals for anthropological studies or simply to offer “exotic” images to a Western audience. LaChapelle’s film repurposes these ethnographic images to establish a visual comparison that seems to equate the dancers in South Central LA in the early twenty-first century with the dancers in Africa from an earlier date. Thus, the footage generates the archive effect through both temporal and intentional disparity even if the exact temporality and the original intended use

Figure 4: *Rize* (David LaChapelle, 2005)



of the footage are both somewhat unclear. LaChapelle's montage generated some critical disapproval, in part because of the lack of labeling, but also because it suggests an equation between "then" and "now" as well as "there" and "here," and thus was understood by some as asserting an essential black identity that persists across space and time (Hewitt 2005: 349–350). Clearly, in addition to epistemological consequences, the archive effect can also have ethical and ideological implications.

In fact, it may be impossible for an appropriation film to generate an experience of temporal disparity without at least a certain degree of intentional disparity. Documents produced at an earlier historical moment can never fully anticipate their future uses. It is much more likely, however, for a film to produce an experience of intentional disparity with very little experience of temporal disparity. In *Passage à l'Acte* (1992), for instance, experimental filmmaker Martin Arnold took footage from *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan, 1962), optically reprinted individual frames of the footage, and re-edited them to make the action move a few frames forward and a few back, creating a stuttering effect on both the image track and the soundtrack. Here, the initial intended purpose of that footage—to serve as part of a narrative fiction film—is subverted for experimental, formalist purposes and artistic (rather than historical) effects. While there is a temporal disparity between the "then" of the making of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the "now" of *Passage à l'Acte*'s production, this temporal disparity is not clearly manifested in the film itself. There is no visible or audible contrast between a "then" and a "now." It is precisely this minimization of temporal disparity in favor of an augmentation of intentional disparity that leads to the exclusion of *Passage à l'Acte* and many other appropriation films from the categories of the "documentary" and the "historical." Indeed, in works like those of Arnold, the historical effects of the archive effect read as incidental to the intentional subversion. Thus, unless an appropriation film produces a relatively strong experience of temporal disparity, it is unlikely to be experienced as "historical."

It is important to emphasize that in all appropriation films the production of both temporal and intentional disparity—and hence, the archive effect—depends, at least to some extent, on the viewer's own extratextual knowledge. If the viewer of *Passage à l'Acte*, for instance, is unaware of *To Kill a*

Mockingbird or does not recognize the cues that this footage was part of a narrative fiction film, the archive effect might not occur. Sobchack (2004) articulates the complex relationship between the viewer and his or her experience of a film as documentary or fiction, this sometimes moving from one mode of consciousness to another in the course of watching the same film.

... in all appropriation films the production of both temporal and intentional disparity – and hence, the archive effect – depends, at least to some extent, on the viewer's own extratextual knowledge.

However weighted on the side of social consciousness and convention, our actual viewing experiences are best described as containing both documentary and fictional moments co-constituted by a dynamic and labile spectatorial engagement with all film images. And although the nature of these moments may be cued, structured, and finally contained by conventional cinematic practices, ultimately it is our own extracine-matic, cultural, and embodied experience and knowledge that governs how we first take up the images we see on the screen and what we make of them. (Sobchack 2004: 273)

Without such extratextual knowledge, the experience of the archive effect—as it occurs through the perception of temporal or intentional disparity—can sometimes be difficult to guarantee, at least without some explicit form of labeling provided by the filmmaker.

This is particularly true when *all* of the documents in a film produce—or have the potential to produce—the archive effect. For instance, Emile de Antonio's *Point of Order!* (1964) was constructed entirely from television kinescopes of the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings that had aired a decade earlier on CBS (Kellner and Streible 2000: 16–17). After his film's initial run, however, de Antonio added a voiceover prologue explaining that he had not shot the footage himself but rather had “found” it and edited it into a feature-length documentary. Clearly, de Antonio wanted his film to generate the archive effect. He wanted audiences to experience a strong sense of intentional disparity and to read the footage through a satirical lens in a way not intended by the original producers of the footage. In this case, the added and explicit voiceover explanation was necessary so that audiences would recognize the footage as archival and the perspective of de Antonio's film as critical.

There are many films in which the status of certain footage is unclear, this impacting their epistemological effects. In much of Chris Marker's work, for instance, it is often difficult to know whether Marker shot certain footage, found it on the street, or found it in an official archive. While watching his films, it is easy to become preoccupied by questions of where the footage came from, whether he shot it or used preexisting documents. This confusion is made explicit in Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983). The first image (Figure 5) is that of three blonde children walking up a path as a woman says in voiceover:

The first image he told me about was of three children on a road in Iceland in 1965. He said that for him, it was the image of happiness and also that he had tried several times to link it to other images, but it never worked. He wrote me: One day I'll have to put it all alone at the beginning of a film with a long piece of black leader. If they don't see happiness in the picture, at least they'll see the black.



Figure 5. *Sans Soleil*
(Chris Marker, 1983)

The image of the three children is otherwise silent and is followed by black leader, then an image of a military airplane, and then black leader again. The voiceover, speaking in the past tense about a “he” who speaks in the future tense of what seems to be the film we are watching, immediately destabilizes the viewer’s position vis-à-vis this image. Are we looking at the film that “he” says he will “one day” make? Is this image of the three children an image that “he” shot in 1965 or was it made for the 1983 film we are presently watching? Is this “he” the filmmaker of *Sans Soleil*, Chris Marker, or the (fictional) filmmaker we learn is named Sandor Krasna? To whom does this image of the children belong? And was this image really shot in 1965 and only appropriated eighteen years later? *Sans Soleil* revels in ambiguities such as this one without ever offering a conclusive answer, and the status of the document as archival or not, while foregrounded in the viewer’s experience, remains impossible to decide.

The indeterminable status of this image (as well as others) in *Sans Soleil* illustrates the complexity of our relationship to the appropriated document. Marker, by complicating the archival status of certain images, makes it clear how much our reading of an image is based in our ability to locate its temporality and the intentions “behind” it. This reading determines whether or not the archive effect occurs, which, if it does, gives rise to a particular experience of the objects represented. When temporal and intentional disparity are uncertain, the viewer is faced with a constant struggle around how much authority to give the indexical recording. This struggle is crucial, because it both

depends on and determines what we give the status of archival evidence. Whether or not the archive effect occurs for different viewers of the same appropriation film may result in very different experiences and understandings of a single text, and hence, of what constitutes archival “truth.”

In conclusion, I suggest that this reformulation of “archival footage” and other “archival documents” not as objects with inherent qualities but as constituted by the experience of the viewer of an appropriation film opens up many avenues for thinking through epistemological and, in particular, historiographical questions about how we come to “know” about the world, and particularly about the past. As given pieces of footage are used and reused in different films for a range of purposes, very different meanings, interpretations, and values may accrue to them for viewers of those films. However, it is, at least in part, the archive effect that constitutes the potential power of such footage. Whether the experience of temporal disparity, which puts different moments in time into contact, or that of intentional disparity, which subverts what we perceive to have been the original intended use of the document, is dominant, the archive effect offers the promise of truth value—of a message sent from another time or place—even as it dwells only in the unstable field of a given viewer’s perception.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Vivian Sobchack for her invaluable help in developing this essay, and Roger Hallas for first suggesting the term “the archive effect.”

Jaimie Baron is an assistant professor at the University of Alberta. Her work has been published in *The Velvet Light Trap*, *Spectator*, *Discourse*, *Eludamos*, *Maska*, *FRAMES* and several anthologies. She is also the founder and director of the Festival of (In)appropriation, an annual international showcase of short, experimental found footage films.

References

- Alain Resnais' "Night and Fog" 2003. DVD case. The Criterion Collection.
- Barthes, Roland. [1968] 1989. "The Death of the Author." Pp. 49–55 in *The Rustle of Language*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bruzzi, Stella. 2000. *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Hewitt, Kim. 2005. "Rize. Dir. David LaChapelle. Lionsgate films, 2005." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 17 (3): 345–352.
- Hutcheon, Linda. [1985] 2000. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Kellner, Douglas, and Dan Streible. 2000. "Introduction: Emile de Antonio: Documenting the Life of a Radical Filmmaker." Pp. 1–84 in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, eds. Douglas Kellner and Dan Streible. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lawder, Standish. 1992. "Comments on Collage Film." Pp. 112–115 in *Found Footage Film*, eds. Cecilia Hausheer and Christoph Settele. Luzern: VIPER.
- Morris, Errol. 2009. "The Case of the Inappropriate Alarm Clock (Part 4)." *New York Times*, 22 October.
- Russell, Catherine. 1999. *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Sobchack, Vivian. 1999. "Toward a Phenomenology of Nonfiction Film Experience." Pp. 241–254 in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, eds. Michael Renov and Jane Gaines. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Sobchack, Vivian. 2004. "The Charge of the Real: Embodied Knowledge and Cinematic Consciousness." Pp. 258–285 in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Steedman, Carolyn. 2002. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Zimmerman, Patricia R. 2008. "The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings." Pp. 1–28 in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, eds. Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmerman. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zryd, Michael. 2003. "Found Footage as Discursive Metahistory: Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation 99*." *Moving Image* 3 (2): 41–61.

Filmography

- Alpert, Jon and Ellen Goosenberg Kent. 2007. *Alive Day Memories: Home from Iraq*. USA.
- Apted, Michael. 1964. *Seven Up!* UK.
- Apted, Michael. 2005. *49 Up*. UK.
- Arnold, Martin. 1992. *Passage à l'Acte*. Austria.
- Bacon, Lloyd. 1940. *Knute Rockne All American*. USA.
- Burns, Ken. 1990. *The Civil War*. USA.
- De Antonio, Emile. 1971. 1964. *Point of Order!* USA.
- De Antonio, Emile. *Millhouse: A White Comedy*. USA.
- Flaherty, Robert. 1922. *Nanook of the North*. USA and France.
- LaChapelle, David. 2005. *Rize*. USA.
- Marker, Chris. 1983. *Sans Soleil*. France.
- Mulligan, Robert. 1962. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. USA.
- Resnais, Alain. 1955. *Night and Fog* (Nuit et Brouillard). France.
- Sington, David. 2007. *In the Shadow of the Moon*. UK and USA.
- Stone, Melinda. 2005. *A Trip Down Market Street: 1905/2005*. USA.
-